

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 748

HE 034 074

AUTHOR Buck, Gail F.
TITLE "White Privilege": Discrimination and Miscommunication--How It Affects/Effects Underrepresented Minority [Groups] on College Campuses.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students; *College Students; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Higher Education; Hispanic American Students; *Minority Groups; Multicultural Education; *Racial Discrimination; Social Problems; *White Students

ABSTRACT

Thirty years after the enactment of civil rights legislation, the meaning of race has become a problem in the United States, largely because the legacy of centuries of white supremacy lives on. Monolithic white supremacy is over, but in a more concealed way, white power and privilege linger. Ethnic under-representation creates a host of problems for the U.S. higher education community. The higher education community must find a way to welcome minority groups on campus. African American and Latino students find themselves discriminated against for a number of reasons, including racial and socioeconomic differences. Institutional marginalization is widespread. Institutions must realize that educating a pluralistic population is a serious and complex exercise. Institutions should provide intervention to enhance the level of ego development for some minority students, especially African American females. College administrators could address some of the negative perceptions members of some ethnic groups hold about others, as exemplified by the attitudes of many Asian international students toward African American students. To promote the success of Latino students, efforts should be concentrated on financial aid, academic support systems, social and cultural support systems, and the campus environment. Those responsible for higher education must work for a cultural shift broad enough to level the playing field for minority students. (SLD)

**“White Privilege”
Discrimination and Miscommunication
How It Affects / Effects
Underrepresented Minority on College Campuses**

**Gail F. Buck
Azusa Pacific University
College Student Affairs**

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Buck

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Definition/description of the issue - Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there is most likely a phenomenon of white privilege that was similarly denied and protected. I realize that many whites have been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that can be counted on cashing in each day, but remain oblivious to it.

White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks (McIntosh, 1988).

Elizabeth Minnich, director of the Women's Center, Wellesley College, pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow "them" to be more like "us" (McIntosh, 1988).

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, identified some of the daily effects of white privilege in her life. She chose conditions that she thought *attaches somewhat more to skin-color privilege* than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. She felt that, her African American co-workers, friends, and acquaintances with whom she came into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and line of work could not count on most of these conditions.

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live.

3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization", I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race
8. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
9. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
10. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
11. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
12. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
13. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color, who constitute the worlds' majority, without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
14. I can be sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge" I will be facing a person of my race.
15. If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
16. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
17. I can go home from most meetings or organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.

18. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race. .
19. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.
20. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color that more or less matches my skin.

As an African American woman, I have not experienced any of the above listed privileges except "being able to arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time." It is disconcerting to read the listed "white privileges" because they bring hurt and disappointment to my heart and spiritual soul. It hurts even more to realize that my children will also experience this hurt and disappointment, just as my parents did. Growing up in an African-American community, these privileges did not appear so blatant. However, attending college in a pre-dominantly white community many of these privileges were obvious but out of my control.

Relevant research delineating the critical elements of the issue - Once, U.S. society was a nearly monolithic racial hierarchy, in which everyone knew "his" place. Today, many are unaware where he or she fits in the U.S. racial order.

Thirty years after the enactment of civil rights legislation, agreement about the continuing existence of racial subordination has vanished. The meaning of race has been deeply problematized. Why? Because the legacy of centuries of white supremacy lives on in the present, despite the partial victories of the 1960's; because the idea of "equality," it turned out, could be reinterpreted, rearticulated, reinserted in the business-as-usual framework of U.S. politics and culture; because the outlawing of formal discrimination, which was a crucial and immediate objective of the 1960's movements,

did not mean that informal racist practices would be eradicated, or indeed even that anti-discrimination laws would be seriously enforced. And yet, it would be inaccurate to say that the movement failed. In virtually every area of social life, the impact of the postwar racial mobilizations is plain to see (Winant, 1994).

White racial attitudes shifted dramatically in the postwar period. Segregation of and discrimination against people of color were supported as principles by a majority of white Americans in the early 1940's, and no doubt in the preceding decades. By the early 1970's, however, support for overt discrimination in employment had nearly vanished, and in most other public spheres of life public accommodations, public transportation, and even public schools was both small and shrinking. So monolithic white supremacy is over, yet in a more concealed way, white power and privilege lives on (Winant, 1994).

Early articles of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Journal, 1960's, reflected a concern over the conditions on campus regarding racial or ethnic issues. The intent of the articles was to provide the readership with an opportunity to learn about the Black power movement that was emergent on college and university campuses. The coordinator of the articles expressed the following concern: many administrators are neither sensitive about nor attuned to the meaning of the presence of increasing numbers of black students on their campuses. The institutional response of "business as usual," ignoring the recognition of blacks' concerns and pleas, cannot peacefully continue (Ahuna, Banning, Hughes, 2000).

Many of the early articles concerning racial and ethnic minority students seem to be narrow in focus. They often reported on topics of minority student characteristics,

retention, and adjustment to campus life. In addition, the responsibility of adjustment was placed on the students and what they could do to have a better college experience. In the 1980's, however, this began to change. The articles started to reflect an expanded or broader interest in and portrayal of ethnically and racially diverse students. Under the expanded perspective, these students were seen as athletes, Greeks, persons who used campus facilities, persons who volunteered, and eventually as students like all others who had to deal with such issues as alcohol use or abuse and academic integrity issues. Seeing ethnically and racially diverse students in all of their complexity, rather than as "minority students" adjusting to campus life, was a major change in the student affairs scholarship that was published in the NASPA journals (Ahuna, Banning, Hughes, 2000).

Ethnic under representation creates a host of problems for the American higher education community including obvious and more prominent sights of white privilege. One of the most serious is whether or not cultural diversity is alive. Educators acknowledge their ineffectiveness complying with legal, social and demographic mandates to increase minority participation in higher education; hence, the field remains racially polarized. The higher educational community must change; it must find a way to welcome the minority group presence on campus to promote and ensure peace, prosperity and an educated work force for the future (Terrell, 1996).

How the issue is exemplified by college students on campus today - African American female college students attending predominantly white colleges and universities bring with them a unique set of circumstances and experiences that may have a profound effect on their adjustment to a college environment. The double burden of racism and sexism is difficult for most African American women to handle. Unless

encouraged to do otherwise, many African American female adolescents and young adults may choose inappropriate psychological “resistance strategies” such as self-denigration due to the internalization of negative self images, excessive autonomy and individualism at the expense of connectedness to the collective, and quick fixes such as early unplanned pregnancies, substance abuse, school failure and food addictions, in their attempts to survive the negative influences of racism and sexism (Johnson, Exum, 1998). Many of the adjustment factors intricately intertwined with the blatant conditions of “white privileges” can make a person of color’s time in college, using the extreme, a life or death situation.

A 1992 study of international students’ on college campuses, perceived comfort level with black Americans, conducted at a large, Midwestern, public research institution, found that Asian international students had just above a moderate comfort level with black Americans. Prior to coming to the United States, participants reported having formed beliefs and attitudes about African Americans from several sources available in their home countries. Students emphasized their fear of African Americans, based on the negative portrayals of African Americans on television, in movies, and in news reports. African Americans were perceived to be represented as “violent hoodlums” and “second class citizens”. Many students also reported that language and cultural differences were also barriers that prevented them from developing relationships with African American students (Talbot, Geelhoed, Ninggal, 1999).

It is clear from the focus group discussions that some of the Asian international students in the study have biases against and some discomfort with African Americans. The comfort level or rather discomfort level of some Asian internationals with African

Americans, can place even a more serious strain on African American students on college campuses, as negative judgments of them create a perception of another major group racially and/or culturally against them. One can understand how miscommunication from one group to another about a race or person, coupled with other negative elements on campus, could destroy one's psychological and physical well being on many college campuses.

Even though Asian students constitute the largest international population studying in the United States it is important to note that this study does not reflect the general perspective of all Asian International students. Some students in the study reported that it was easy to form relationships with African Americans. They indicated that some of their experiences with African Americans contradicted the stories they had heard before leaving their countries of origin.

In researching racially discriminatory barriers of Latinos as they relate to white privileges and their under representation on college campuses, I found that the barriers were not as much racially related, but rather, low socioeconomic status, and cultural and gender-role stereotyping.

Socioeconomic conditions give rise to one of the first obstacles faced by Latino students in the educational system. Latinos are the most segregated ethnic /racial group in the nation and maintain that a clear relationship exists between school segregation and low college matriculation rates. Attending segregated, poorly financed schools can lead to low achievement, high drop-out rates, and inadequate college preparation (Rodriguez, Guido, Torres, Talbot, 2000).

One of the underlying reasons the United States educational system has served Latinos so poorly is the myths and stereotypes that have been allowed to flourish regarding the Latino culture. In the 1950's and 1960's, social scientists promoted a "cultural deficit" model, focusing on cultural disadvantages, to explain the lack of Latino participation in higher education. Mexican Americans were stereotyped as being undisciplined, fatalistic, irrational, and passive. These stereotypes were particularly damaging to Mexican American females, who were portrayed as submissive and docile, with no ambitions other than producing children. This "blame the victim" model failed to examine the environmental circumstances, which limit educational opportunities (Rodriguez, Guido, Torres, Talbot, 2000).

Perhaps the most elusive, yet pervasive barrier to participation and persistence in college for Latinos is the experience of institutional marginalization. Anglo-influenced educational institutions devalue many characteristics that bind Latinos as a group, for the most part. Consequently, Latinos often feel peripheral or separate from the mainstream university environment. When individuals attempt to conciliate this uncertainty between two cultural norms, acculturative stress can increase, making the transition more difficult (Rodriguez, Guido, Torres, Talbot, 2000).

Some ways in which Latinos experience institutional marginalization are numerous. As members of a racial / ethnic minority, they encounter stereotyping and racism both in the classroom and in social settings. Latinos experience discord within the academic setting as they relate to attitudes towards authority figures, expressing disagreement, dealing with conflict, expectations of friendship, intrinsic vs. extrinsic

motivation, cooperation vs. competition, struggles with independence and verbal and non-verbal patterns. In essence, many of the behaviors and communications styles exhibited by Latinos are not valued in a university setting (Rodriguez, Guido, Torres, Talbot, 2000).

Important future considerations of this issue - In order to begin to understand racial and cultural differences on college campuses, institutions must realize that educating a pluralistic population is a serious, complex and multi-dimensional exercise. Success mandates challenging all and changing many aspects of institutional life. Understanding differences must be viewed as an opportunity rather than an obstacle.

There are fortunately proven methods for generating success. The number of minority students on the campus makes a substantial difference. When minority student enrollments approach 20 percent of the total population, the campus environment shifts from accommodating to inclusiveness. Faculty must be re-educated to work effectively with students for whom they share relatively little cultural affinity; they should accept the possibility that they have as much to learn as to teach. Faculty and administrators must see that, “white privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions to those of color and sometimes seen as blatant racism.”

From a student affairs perspective regarding ethnic and racial issues, it is suggested that a movement away from looking at the individual ethnic and racially diverse student as “the problem” to looking at the “environment” as an important part of the problem. There is a need to focus on institutional racism and campus conditions with an emphasis on the need to bring about change. Instead of seeing the need for ethnically and racially diverse students to find better ways to adjust, the perspective articulated

should be pluralistic. The idea is that there is no one way students should be, or have to behave to fit in, and that the campus environment should be open to the fact that different did not equal wrong (Ahuna, Banning, Hughes, 2000).

In facilitating healthy ego development in African American female college students attending predominantly white universities, it is suggested that institutions provide intervention to enhance the level of ego development of these students so that they will be able to become more self-directed, more introspective, and less susceptible to conformity pressures. They must increase understanding of themselves and their relationships with others along with their own appreciation of themselves (Johnson, Exum, 1998).

College administrators could address some of the negative perceptions and attitudes Asian international students might hold about African Americans, by encouraging interaction among members of various ethnic groups on campus. Many of the focus group participants believed that the different ethnic groups had difficulty establishing friendships with those in other groups and many had ideas for increasing social interaction among groups. One idea was that orientation leaders should come from diverse backgrounds, which would enable incoming international student to have initial positive contacts with African Americans and members of other ethnic minorities; the students reported that their own orientation was led by someone who was Asian and had not include a discussion of issue of diversity (Talbot, Geelhoed, Ninggal, 1999).

To promote the success of Latino college students, efforts should be concentrated in the following areas: financial aid, academic support systems, social/cultural support systems, and campus environment. Academic and student affairs administrators must

join together and demonstrate a commitment to Latino students by valuing their contributions, while making an honest effort to improve the services and campus climate for these often “invisible” people (Rodriguez, Guido, Torres, Talbot, 2000).

Approaching a collective majority, African American, Asian American, Latin American, Native American and other minority groups are still expected to adjust to existing cultural environments in American higher education. Consequently, there must be a realization of the need for a cultural shift broad enough to level the playing field between existing and emerging cultural environments. Only then will cultural and racial diversity become alive, well or even possible on the American college campus (Terrell, 1996).

References

Ahuna, L., Banning, J., Hughes B., (fall 2000). A Study of the NASPA Journal (1967-1996): A 30-Year Reflection of Scholarship in Student Affairs Focusing on Race and Ethnicity. *NASPA Journal*, 66-67.

Johnson-Newman, D., Exum, H., (fall 1998). Facilitating Healthy Ego Development in African American Female College Students Attending Predominantly White Universities. *NASPA Journal*, 70-72, 75.

McIntosh, P. (1988). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. *A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies*, paper 189,

Rodriguez, A., Guido-DiBrito, F., Torres, V., Talbot, D., (spring 2000). Latina College Students: Issues and Challenges for the 21st Century. *NASPA Journal*, 514, 517-518, 523.

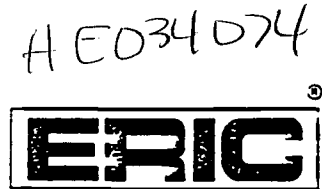
Talbot, D., Geelhoed, R., Ninggal, M., (spring 1999). A Qualitative Study of Asian International Students' Attitudes toward African American, 211, 215, 217.

Terrell, C., (1996). Common Sense and Diversity: Why are cultural differences disguised as "Maladjustments"? 88.

Winant, H. (1994). *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 53-56.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: "White Privilege" Discrimination + Miscommunication; How it Affects/Effects Underrepresented Minorities on Campus	
Author(s): Gail F. Buck	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date: Spring 2000

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

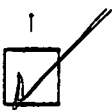
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____ Sample _____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1



Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

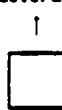
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____ Sample _____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A



Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

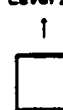
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____ Sample _____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B



Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: Gail Buck	Printed Name/Position/Title: Gail Buck, Graduate Student APU
Organization/Address: 11508 205th Street LAKEWOOD, CA 90715	Telephone: (213) 740-7837
	FAX: (213) 740-4827
	E-Mail Address: gail_buck@marshall.usc.edu
	Date: 6/21/01

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:

Address:

Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:

Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC® Clearinghouse for

Community Colleges

3051 Moore Hall, Box 951521

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521 EE 45

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility

1100 West Street, 2nd Floor

Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080

Toll Free: 800-799-3742

FAX: 301-953-0263

e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov

WWW: <http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com>